

Assessment for learning: Improving teaching and learning in classroom.

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ABSTRACT

The practice of meritocracy in the Malaysian system of education is illustrated by the way where high academic excellence is the main criteria for selection of students entering universities. What are the roles of school teachers in the assessment processes in order to help students to accomplish the required level of academic achievement? School assessment usually have two major purposes, i.e., to provide and report grades on student's learning status, known as assessment of learning and to promote student's learning, also known as assessment for learning. Assessment for learning occurs when teachers use inferences on students' progress to inform them of their teaching. This concept paper will discuss on how assessment for learning can improve teaching and the learning processes in the classroom. Improving teaching and learning through assessment depends on the provision of effective feedback to pupils, active involvement of pupils in their own learning, adjustment of teaching to take account on assessment results and the influence of assessment on pupil's motivation and self-esteem. Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and good assessment practice is a key feature of effective teaching and learning in schools.

Introduction

The major goal of our educational process is to help learners gain a learning ability and create a behavioural change. Education also aimed to bring about desired changes in learner, whether to be more knowledgeable, better skilled or to influence their attitudes and values positively. The past education symbolized by classical class environment was based on the transfer of knowledge which describes the interaction among teachers, learners and education curriculum contents viewed from educational teaching traditions of the past (William, Roberta & Lora, 2004) The educational process paradigm of today symbolized by case studies was requires a two-way communication between teacher and learners as well as among learners themselves. In today's world, a well educated learner knows how to obtain information, makes use of the information, advanced thinking, perception and problem solving skills, process information creatively and does not hesitate to assess and express himself and has the ability to create a new information.

New Paradigm in education

The traditional methods of teaching is seriously questioned by today educators. School are faced with the problem on how to increase student motivation while satisfying standard education requirements?. The answer can be found in the new paradigm shift of education.

The new paradigm shift in education had introduced a holistic education which is an education for development of human potential of the person as whole or 'person – centred education'. In order to achieve a new paradigm shift in education, we need to promote a high investment, high capacity educational system in which highly skilled teachers are able to generate creativity and ingenuity among their students, by experiencing creativity and flexibility themselves in how they are treated and developed as knowledge society professionals(Carol,2008). The new paradigm in education also included the changing of assessment methods.

Assessment is a large measure a product of 20th century thinking, and has been greatly influenced by conceptions of the educability of individuals and of the functions of education that had currency at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. At that time, the prevailing thinking in education and psychology was guided by such beliefs as the fixed nature of intelligence and the limited educability of low-status populations. These views were also influenced by the limited opportunities for schooling that existed in that era, and the limited need for advanced levels of education in order for individuals to fulfil their responsibilities as productive members of society.

History of assessment

The functions of assessment were thus generally limited to classification, prediction and sorting. By the end of the 20th century, educators and general public realized that the principal functions of education were thought to be the transfer of knowledge, skills and values to those thought to be capable of benefiting from it. With the realization that most human beings are educable came social and economic phenomena that in turn influence pedagogy. The changed have confronted the fields of educational assessment with new challenges. Beyond such functions as classification, prediction, and sorting assessment is increasingly being called upon to complement and serve these transformative ideas concerning education.

By the end of the 20th century, assessment was under heavy pressure to serve the purpose of governmental accountability. At the same time, educational assessment should also be the principal vehicle for advancing the process of teaching and learning. Educational assessments of the future will be increasingly concerned with the improvement of teaching and learning as its principal purpose (Carol, 2008).Good assessment practise is a key features of effective teaching and learning in schools.

What is assessment?

Assessment is a systematic process of gathering, interpreting, and acting upon data related to student learning and experience for the purpose of developing a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their education experience (Huba & Freed, 2000). Assessment refers to the process of collecting evidence and making judgement, relating to outcomes, such as students' achievement of particular goals of learning or teacher's and other's understanding (Wyne, 2007). Assessment is any systematic procedure for collecting information that can be used to make influences about the characteristic of people or object (Alastair,2008) Harlen, 1992 define assessment as a process of firstly gathering evidence and secondly interpreting that evidence in the light of some defined criterion in order to form a judgement. Assessment will help students to use any information to help them with their learning (Susan & Anthony, 2008). Assessment is a much broader term that includes the practice of testing and variety of formal and informal methods of gathering information. Assessment focuses not only on student performance and potential but also on the factors that influence students' learning- personality, level and style of motivation (Diann,Gayla, Jay & Kay, 2009). It can be concluded that assessment is not only for the purpose of the increase in grade, certification, and graduation but the most important is assessment can be use as a teaching and learning tools.

Main Purpose for Assessment

According to Black and William 1998,the three main purposes for assessment as described as follows:

Assessment for learning integrates assessment into the learning and teaching process and establishes the teacher's role in assessment. Through assessment for learning teachers ascertain students' knowledge, perceptions and misconceptions and use this evidence to inform curriculum planning and teaching practice in order to support students to operate at the edge of their competence. Teachers use a range of assessment tools and teaching approaches integrating assessment in the learning and teaching process.

Assessment as learning establishes students' roles and responsibilities in relation to their learning and assessment. It engages students in self- and peer-assessment and

promotes students' confidence and self-esteem through and understanding of how they learn. Its focus on student reflection on their learning is powerful in building metacognition and an ability to plan for their own future learning goals.

Assessment of learning describe the extent to which a student has achieved the learning goals, including the standards and demonstrates what the student knows and can do. Its purpose is summative and gives an "overview of previous learning. This is the assessment that is used to certify learning for reporting to students, the parents and the system.

Assessment as learning and assessment of learning are the traditional function of assessment. This paper will discuss about assessment for learning as it was a new method of assessment. A key aspect of e assessment for learning is giving students feedback on their growth toward the learning goals they need to master (Black and William ,1998).It helps students understand where they are now and compared to where they should be going, and it gives suggestion for getting there

Assessment for learning

The potential of assessment directly to support learning has begun to come under the spotlight as it is increasingly being recognized that 'raising standards involves focusing beyond what children learn, to how they learn and how teachers intervene in this process'(Patricia Broadfoot,2007).Recently, assessment play role in promoting learning among students. Assessment for learning and assessment of learning often used interchangeably in the educational community. Assessment of learning refers to the very general communication function of assessment, whereas assessment for learning refers to what i termed earlier assessment as curriculum. Assessment for learning has to be planned as an integral part of teaching and is orientated to supporting progression in learning. It may be either criterion-referenced or student-referenced and its purpose is to lead to action that will support further learning and attainment.

Assessment for learning is a process used by teachers and students to recognize and respond to enhance learning. Students are aware of learning objectives and success criteria and use these as the basis of self assessment feedback. Successful of assessment for learning depends on students knowing where they are and where they want to be. This

involves both the teacher and children in a process of continual reflection and review about progress. Effective questioning develops children's thinking. Quality feedback is used by students, and feeds into future learning. Teachers adjust their plans in response to formative assessment.

The 10 principles of assessment for Learning(Black and William,1998):

- (a) Assessment for learning should be part of effective planning and teaching
- (b) Assessment for learning should focus on how students learn
- (c) Assessment for learning should be recognised as central to classroom practise
- (d) Assessment for learning should be regarded as a key professional skill for teachers
- (e)Assessment for learning should be sensitive and constructive because any assessment has an emotional impact
- (f) Assessment for learning should take account of the importance of learner motivation
- (g) Assessment for learning should promote commitment to learning goals and shared understanding of the criteria by which they are assessed
- (h) Learners should receive constructive guidance about how to improve
- (i) Assessment for learning develop learners' capacity for self assessment so that they can become reflective and self -managing
- (j) Assessment for learning should recognise the full range of achievements of all learners.

Improving teaching and learning using assessment for learning

Assessment for learning involves using assessment in the classroom to improve teaching and learning methods. To effectively use assessment for learning to improve teaching in classroom, teachers need to know their students well, know why students make mistakes and able to make judgements about next steps or interventions (Albert Oosterhoof,2009). Teachers should share learning intentions with students and use them to mark work or give feedback or rewards build in review time for themselves and their students. Encourage students to take responsibility for their learning by providing opportunities for students to describe their response to learning intentions or targets, the strategies they use and the judgements they make in relation to their progress. Lastly, teachers should analyse pupils' performance in tests and use the information for future learning plans. Applying assessment for learning in classroom need teachers top changed their role, from a presenter of content to a leader of an exploration and development of ideas which all students were involved.

Assessment for learning has its roots in classroom practice, and is about striving to improve children's learning through known research principles with teachers acting as 'action researchers' continually re-defining practice for themselves according to those principles. To introduce assessment for learning in school, it is important to build on existing practice, to be consistent in the application of the features and to plan for assessment opportunities based on knowledge of the children and their preferred learning styles (Lesli.W.W,2005). Assessment for learning provide feedback for teachers about how well students have learned and how well they have been taught by the teacher. If the students have failed to grasp important point, re – teach the material before proceeding to new material. If students have accomplished their short-term learning goals, teachers can enrich or extend learning in that area or move to another area.

Assessment for learning carries much potential for transforming teaching and learning process in ways that enhance learning outcomes. These outcomes includes attainments as conventionally assessed through performance tests and examination and other valued outcomes such as the development of motivation for learning as an enduring disposition (John Gardner,2006). What makes assessment for learning both exciting and challenging is that, to be truly effective, it requires teachers and students to change the way they think about their classroom roles and their norms of behaviour. Teachers should keep records of the important results of the assessment, not for grading ,but to keep her selves organized. For example, teachers should know what sort of feedback they have given, over time, to a students on a particular skill. Keeping records will help ensure that teachers are systematic and have an opportunity to observe all students on all behaviours or skills.

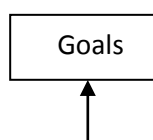
Assessment for learning is not used for grading. Students need and deserve an opportunity to learn before they are graded on how well they have learned. Assessment for learning is used before instruction, to find out where students are, and during instruction, to find out how they are progressing. The assessment is informational, not judgemental like summative assessment. Students are free to pay attention to figuring out how they are doing and what they need to work on without worrying about grade(Susan, K.G.& Robert,L.J.,2010)

Students should improve their learning through assessment for learning. Assessment for learning is effective when students show changes in their attitude to learning and in their motivation, self-esteem, independence, initiative and confident. Students are able to show changes in their responses to questions, in contributions to plenary sessions, improve attainment and also recognising progress in their written work, skills, knowledge and

understanding. From the students' viewpoint, they have to change from behaving as passive recipients of the knowledge offered to becoming active learners who can take responsibility for their own learning. Current thinking about learning acknowledges that learners must ultimately be responsible for their learning, since no-one else can do it for them. Thus assessment for learning must involve students, so as to provide them with information about how well they are doing and guide their subsequent efforts.

Assessments for learning encourage students to become more autonomous learners as a result of active involvement in their own learning. Assessment for learning provide feedback to students about their learning. In order to improve learning, feedback must give students specific guidance about what they must do, at the time they need it, in language they can understand (Air Asian.P.W,2005) Feedback must integrated with instructional process in order to improve learning. Good assessment practice will motivate students to study. Assessment will help students get a clear picture of the goals for learning and help them improve and contribute to motivation as well as learning. Assessment for learning support student self-regulation of learning-when students take control of their own learning.

Figure 1.1 represent assessment for learning as a cycle of event. Evidence is gathered during activity A and interpreted in terms of progress towards the lesson goals. Some notion of progression in relation to the goal is needed for this interpretation, so that students are can be used to indicate what next step is appropriate. Helping the students to take this next step, leading to activity B, is the way in which the evidence of current learning is feedback into teaching and learning. Thus the students are at the centre of the process and the two-headed arrows in figure 1.1 indicate that they have a role in the collection, interpretation and use of the evidence of their learning.



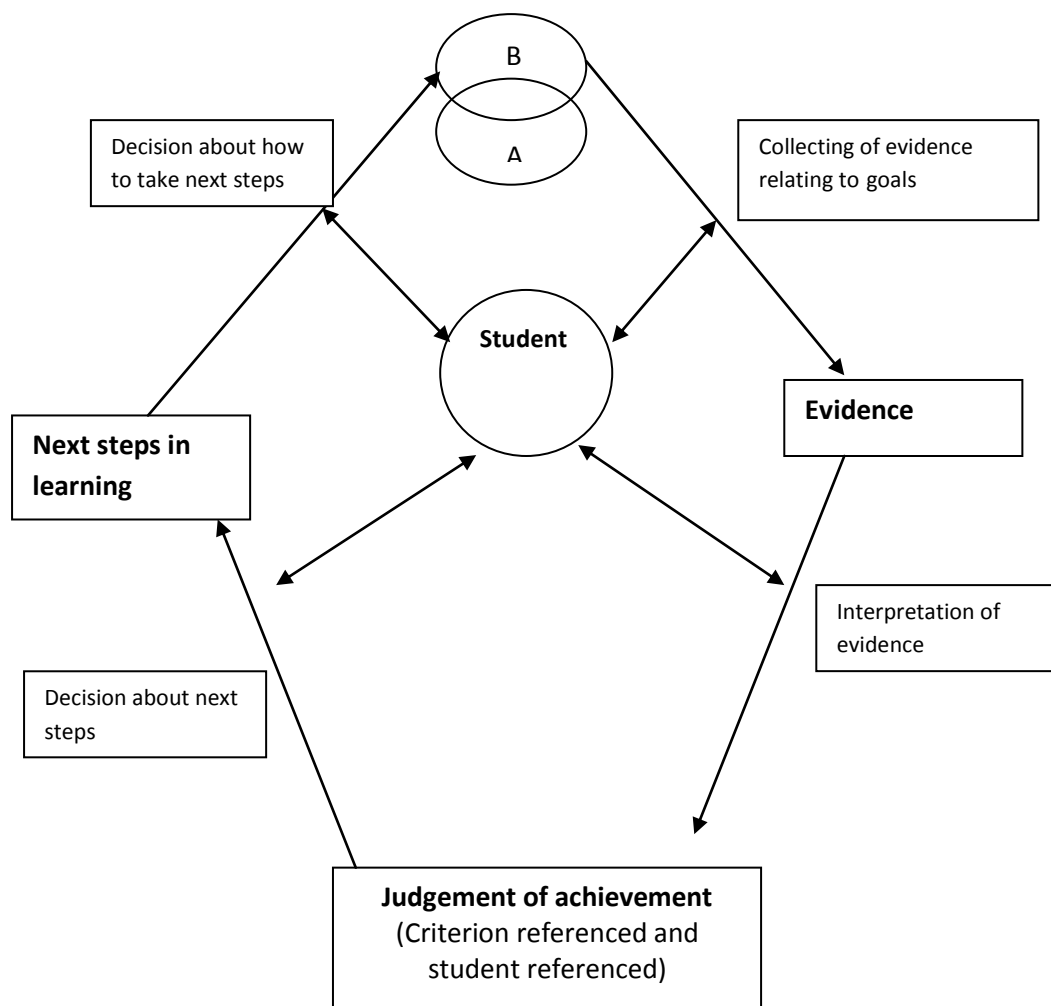


Figure 1.1: Assessment for learning as a cycle of events (adapted from Harlen,2000)

Issues

National Education System for the time being was too exam-oriented. Parents, schools, teachers and students received many impact of studying for exam phenomenon. Students study for exam, teachers also teach for exam and their parents spent a lot of money for the purpose of exam. School activities also focus more on programs related to the examination. This situation, if allowed to continue will result in negative implications for the development of human capital in this country. Assessment for learning is a new approach in assessment methods. We used assessment to improve teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Assessment for learning is intrinsic to the process of teaching and learning. As the teachers teach, they can make a judgement all the time, and many of these judgements will be formative assessments. They will not involve giving grades, marks or levels to pieces of work, but are instead focused on taking learning forwards. Formative assessment can improve learning by sharing the learning journey with students as agents in their own development. As we have discussed above, the importance of issues such as self-esteem, self-regulation and self-efficacy all play a part in promoting positive models of learning. Assessment for learning developed a secure assessment practices in the classroom. Formative assessment is clearly very demanding. Changes in classroom practice are central not marginal to its effectiveness so the accomplishment of formative assessment will mean changes in pedagogy. Teachers must be aware of what formative assessment is, the important role students can play, why formative assessment is important and how it can be incorporated into teaching and learning.

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